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## Committees:

- Health Care,  
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- Children and Family Services
- Transportation

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# 2004 Legislative Session Progress Report to the Community

*From Rep. Barbara Bailey*  
10th Legislative District

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

There's much to report about the 2004 session. I'm proud to say we accomplished some significant things that will help create jobs, bolster our struggling economy and improve schools.

We'll need to continue our fiscal discipline, however, and continue fighting for reforms to make the state more attractive to employers and health insurance more affordable for working families.

Important local projects in our communities will receive funding because they were included in the 2004 transportation and capital improvement budgets that passed this session.

I sincerely appreciated hearing from many of you during the past legislative session. Thank you for all your calls, letters, emails and visits. Your feedback helps me do a better job of representing you.

Sincerely,

Barbara Bailey

## A budget balancing act

The good news is we passed a state budget that doesn't raise taxes, doesn't cut core programs and leaves nearly \$300 million in reserves for unexpected expenses; this cushion is not as much as the state should have but it is significantly better than the governor's original proposal. I and other lawmakers cautiously endorsed this supplemental spending bill recognizing we will likely face a \$1 billion budget shortfall in the next biennium.

### *Budget highlights:*

- Adds higher education slots for high-demand fields;
- Funds a 1 percent pay increase for classified public school employees;
- Reduces monthly premiums for Medicaid families to as little as \$15 or nothing at all depending on income;
- Provides \$13 million for nursing homes and home health-care workers.

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10th Legislative District



*Rep. Bailey discussing healthcare in the House Committee, in her role as Ranking Republican*

## Help for health care

The 2004 budget increases grants to hospitals serving a large number of uninsured or underinsured patients by \$10 million. It also enables public hospital districts, like ours in Island County, to keep an additional \$6.6 million in federal funding. This new funding should help maintain a vital community service over the short run but more must be done.

I'm disappointed in the Legislature's inability to pass meaningful small group insurance reform to give working families the option of affordable health insurance.

We must make it possible for small employers to provide health insurance to hundreds of thousands of Washingtonians, and create health plan choices that small employers can really and truly afford. This will top my list of "things to accomplish" next session.

I'll also continue my efforts to pass comprehensive tort reform to reduce the cost of medical malpractice insurance and keep good doctors in our communities.

## Help for seniors with...

### *Health care costs*

A new law, in effect right now and in time for annual renewals, gives back to seniors their discounts for various payment methods, including electronic fund transfers or annual installments, and for spouses.

Seniors who have Medicare Supplement insurance can once again save hundreds of dollars a year—some say as much as \$300—off the cost of their premiums. Seniors came up with the idea for the legislation, seniors lobbied for it and the state's largest senior organization, AARP Washington, endorsed it. It's a great example of how the people we represent as legislators can make a difference in their lives and the lives of others throughout the state.

### *Property taxes*

I want to do all I can to help seniors protect their homes. A new law I supported increases the amount of money you can earn and still be eligible for property tax exemptions. If you're on a fixed income and have a disability, you should now get more relief from high property taxes. This is the right thing to do. I'll continue working to create even more much deserved breaks like this for our communities' seniors.

## Creating and protecting jobs

I worked to pass a law that will continue tax-incentives designed to attract high-tech jobs and investments to rural counties of Washington, and made sure that Island County in particular would benefit. This legislation ensures the vitality of employers—such as call centers—that are currently in Island County and those that would like to relocate here.

Unfortunately many bills that would help the economy and create new jobs, by limiting agency rule-making authority and improving the workers' compensation program, did not become law and require our immediate attention next session.

*By renewing and extending tax incentives for rural communities like ours, we give employers the help they need to bring jobs home and create prosperity for families.*





### ***Cama Beach renovation***

Camano Island's favorite park enjoyed by so many of you will receive \$2 million in state funding for a major renovation. Thanks to residents who worked so hard to identify this local need in our community!



### **Better tools for teachers, students and parents**

I'm pleased we've passed a new law which will significantly improve the Washington Assessment of Student Learning. To begin with, starting in 2008 students must pass the WASL in reading, writing and mathematics in order to graduate from high school. Science would be added in 2010. This new law gives students the opportunity to learn from their mistakes and re-take the test, enabling them to graduate with the knowledge and skills that will help them succeed. It also makes sure teachers receive more defined academic standards to enable them to do an even better job helping students master those areas necessary for passing the WASL.

### **Improving transportation at home**

Existing ferry services will continue to be funded in our communities, as well as new boats with increased capacity, thanks to the supplemental transportation budget we passed this session. It also recognizes the need to develop a long range-plan for more efficient marine travel in communities like ours; something I've called for in my role on the House Transportation Committee.

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***Ferries are a critical part of our transportation system and an important extension of other byways that move people and goods.***



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I'll continue working to ensure that funding for a new ferry terminal stays on the table for discussion, as it was not funded this year. We must ensure that we will have continued reliable service on and off the island via Keystone and Port Townsend. Desperately needed improvements to ferries that make the Mukilteo-Clinton run will also be at the top of my list of transportation concerns.

### **We're a model for the state**

Our community has done an exemplary job working in concert with one of our area's largest employers, Whidbey Island Naval Station. Now we're a model for other communities throughout the state.

A new law passed this session will help keep military installations in Washington, protect citizens and provide jobs. It calls for more accountable local government planning around the state's military installations.

As a member of the a member of the Joint Committee on Veteran's and Military Affairs, I shared the example of how our District's cities and counties work hand in hand with the state and our naval base to make sure the communities' development plans complement, not hinder, our local military facility.

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***Whidbey Island Naval Station contributes to the vitality of our communities by creating jobs and protecting citizens.***

***I want to make sure it and other military installations around the state are able to perform their missions, and that we do everything we can to support their value to our communities so they stay in Washington.***

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*From Rep. Barbara Bailey*

10th Legislative District

**Please join me at UPCOMING TOWN HALLS  
on Wed., April 28<sup>th</sup>**

- 9-10 am in Stanwood, Lincoln School Senior Apartments  
Conference Room (across the street from senior center),  
7336 NW 276th Street
- 1-2 pm in La Conner, Maple Center Upper Room,  
104 Commercial Street
- 4-5 pm in Coupeville, Coupeville Recreation Hall,  
901 NW Alexander St.

*My legislative seatmates, Rep. Sehlin and Sen. Haugen,  
and I look forward to seeing you!*

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*State Representative*  
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